NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
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EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE

ANNCR:

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMON MARKET AND THE ARAB LEAGUE ARE MEETING THIS WEEK IN LUXEMBOURG TO CONTINUE WHAT IS CALLED THE "EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE." (MAY 18-20). EDIE APPLE REPORTS ON THE BACKGROUND OF THIS MEETING.

VOICE:

THE IDEA OF A EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE CAME IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE NINETEEN SEVENTY-THREE MIDDLE EAST WAR AND THE RESULTING ARAB OIL EMBARGO. THE DIALOGUE IS SUPPOSED TO ADD A NEW DIMENSION TO EXISTING BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS AND THE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE COMMON MARKET AND INDIVIDUAL ARAB COUNTRIES.

THE GENERAL COMMISSION, MEETING THIS WEEK IN LUXEMBOURG, WAS SET UP IN PARIS IN JULY NINETEEN SEVENTY-FOUR BY THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF FRANCE AND KUWAIT AND THE TOP OFFICIALS OF THE ARAB LEAGUE AND THE COMMON MARKET.

A FIRST MEETING OF EXPERTS MET IN CAIRO IN JUNE OF NINETEEN SEVENTY-FIVE. THAT MEETING WAS ALMOST CALLED OFF BECAUSE OF A TRADE AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE COMMON MARKET. BUT THE EUROPEANS WERE ABLE TO ASSURE THE ARABS THAT IT WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY AGREEMENTS WITH WHICH HAS BEEN THE CASE.

AT THE CAIRO MEETING AND SUBSEQUENT MEETING IN ROME AND ABU DHABI EXPERTS WORKED OUT THE AREAS THE DIALOGUE

SHOULD COVER -- VARIOUS FORMS OF ECONOMIC, INDUSTRIAL, CULTURAL AND TECHNICAL EXCHANGES. THEY HAVE APPROVED A LIST OF PROJECTS, PRIMARILY AIMED AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARAB COUNTRIES, AND SOME JOINT RESEARCH PROJECTS.

AT THIS WEEKS MEETING OF THE GENERAL COMMISSION, THE TWO DELEGATIONS WILL REVIEW THESE PROJECTS -- MOST OF WHICH WILL BE CARRIED OUT THROUGH BILATERAL ARRANGEMENTS. THEY WILL ALSO DISCUSS SOME AREAS WHERE THE EXPERTS DIDN'T REACH COMPLETE AGREEMENT, INCLUDING THE TRANSFER OF WESTERN SKILLS TO THE ARAB WORLD, AND PROBLEMS OF ARAB WORKERS IN COMMON MARKET COUNTRIES AND SPECIAL TRADE PREFERENCES.

THE ARABS ORIGINALLY HOPED THAT THIS FIRST MEETING OF THE GENERAL COMMISION WOULD BE ON THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL TO GIVE IT GREATER PRESTIGE. BUT THE EUROPEANS RESISTED THE IDEA, IN PART BECAUSE OF THE REPRESENTATION PROBLEMS. INSTEAD THE DELEGATIONS ARE LED BY AMBASSADORS FROM LUXEMBOURG AND BAHRAIN, THE COUNTRIES NOW PRESIDING OVER THE TWO ORGANIZATIONS.

IN THE POLITICAL DISCUSSION THAT WILL START THE MEETING THE EUROPEANS ARE EXPECTED TO POINT OUT THAT THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THE DIALOGUE IS IN ITSELF POLITICALLY IMPORTANT. ON THE SUBJECT OF THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION THE NINE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAVE AGREED TO REAFFIRM THEIR JOINT STATEMENT OF NINETEEN SEVENTY-THREE. THE STATEMENT ENDORSES THE RIGHT OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE TO EXPRESS THEIR NATIONAL IDENTITY, CALLS FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED

TERRITORIES, AND SAYS ALL COUNTRIES IN THE AREA INCLUDING ISRAEL SHOULD LIVE IN PEACE BEHIND SAFE RECOGNIZED BORDERS.

THE EUROPEAN SAY THEY WILL CONSIDER ANY ISSUES RAISED BY THE ARABS. BUT DESPITE SOME DISAGREEMENTS ON THE PROPER APPROACH TO THE MIDDLE EAST, ALL NINE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ARE UNANIMOUS THAT THE EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE IS NOT AN APPROPRIATE FORUM TO NEGOTIATE A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT OF ANY KIND.

JS/PBM/CAK